

IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS OF PRIMARY STUDENTS SCHOOL
THROUGH COMIC STRIPS

Presented to
The Graduate Program of
Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by
Carlos Andrés Rojas Murillo

May 2022

Advisor: Paula M. Wilder

Abstract

Speaking is a crucial part of language learning and teaching. This language skill is considered one of the most productive abilities for interaction among people. In that sense, including activities that promote speaking within EFL classrooms enhances the learning and teaching process. Therefore, this thesis is intended to help teachers implement one strategy that encourages and improves primary students' speaking skills within the EFL homerooms. That strategy uses the comic strips technique, which gives teachers a sequential tool that can be included in the lesson plans promoting more challenging dynamics and helping students' Speaking skills enrich vocabularies, improve creativities, and improve pronunciations and organizing ideas. On top of that, implementing this technique allows learners to interact easily with other same-aged learners, make new friends, or initiate a conversation. For that reason, this paper contributes with an adequate opportunity to promote the speaking practices by using comic strips that can help the students speak well, comprehend texts, memorize, recall words, improve grammatical competence, and increase engagement and motivation.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Carmencita Chami Tunay, my children Hans and Ashley Rojas Chami, who have encouraged and supported me throughout my graduate studies.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank God, our heavenly father, for all the strength given to me during this highly demanding process. Secondly, I would like to thank my sister-in-law Claudia Chami Tunay, who has supported me in pursuing and obtaining my MA TESOL. Thirdly, I would like to thank my professors Dr. Michelle Pleasance for all the support given over the distance and Dr. Paula Wilder, my thesis advisor, who made this work possible. Her guidance and advice carried me through all the stages of writing my project. Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my mother, father, and sisters for their continued support and understanding when undertaking my research and writing project.

Table of Contents

	Page
Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Dedications	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapters	
1. Chapter One: Introduction	1
2. Chapter Two: Literature Review	5
3. Chapter Three: Project Design	19
4. Chapter Four: The Project	22
5. Chapter Five: Conclusions	34
References	36

List of figures

Figures	Page
4.1 Home Page	22
4.2 Introduction	23
4.3 Pre-speaking activities (blank spaces)	24
4.4 Pre-speaking activities (gap filling)	25
4.5 Speaking activity (comic strips)	26
4.6 Comic strip samples	32

Chapter One: Introduction

English is an essential means of communication that is used worldwide. It plays a vital role as an international language that is used in various fields. Realizing the importance of English, the administrative leaders of Jose Manuel Restrepo school proclaimed that it is one of the compulsory subjects which becomes an integral part of the school curriculum at the education center. Therefore, the teaching of English in that state high school has been driven to help the students to be able to communicate in English; in other words, they have to master English both in verbal and written forms. However, unfortunately, the objectives have been changing with the passing of the years due to the ICFES national exam, which is in charge of evaluating the level of the students regarding knowledge that has made the leaders focus on obtaining good results for English level among state high schools. Undoubtedly, this new objective has included new subject matters, which aim at developing listening, writing, and reading and comprehension skills, putting aside the speaking ability.

With the implementation of that new target in the school, most of the high school EFL teachers have had to feel implicitly obligated to carry out a curriculum aimed to get excellence in the test as mentioned above, putting aside the continuity of the development of one of the communicative skills which is the speaking ability. That situation has made the English communicative skills teachers in the primary section have to change part of their curriculum to prepare students with more English grammatical basis, but with less development of their skills

to communicate, and therefore, that occurrence has made today's students have low-level to convey information verbally in the English language.

As stated in the school-based curriculum in Jose Manuel Restrepo high school, one of the English learning objectives is understanding and producing speech or written texts which are carried out in four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the four skills, speaking skills are considered as an essential skill to be mastered because it is the primary indicator of successful language learning, which means that success in language learning is often measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language (Richards, 2008, p. 19). Thus, teachers must be concerned about teaching speaking without ignoring other skills.

Although speaking is considered one of the primary language skills that students should enhance, it has been widely noticed that most students face difficulties speaking English. And Jose Manuel Restrepo school is not the exception because primary students' lack of speaking is also seen in this education center, which is due to that 1) the students encounter difficulties in pronouncing English words, 2) many of them have no idea how to pronounce words that are commonly used, and 3) they lack the necessary vocabulary items. Therefore, they find it difficult to form sentences in English, and as a result of that adversity, their sentences are grammatically incorrect.

On the one hand, most EFL teachers in JMR school look for tools that can activate the speaking ability in the foreign language, that works at the beginning of the class, but that rapidly disappear due to that the teachers do not count on a sequential tool, creating confusion in what they want from the students in addition to not using English as much as possible in the classroom. In fact, they use Spanish almost all of the time to explain the topics, materials, giving

feedback, and only use English expressions to open and end the class. On the other hand, the students do not feel confident when it comes to talking and prefer being quiet or drawing upon their mother tongue not to lose face in the presence of the other participants, which makes the teachers divert the purpose of the class recurring to other activities. That fact does not only happen in JMR school, but also in most state schools in Bogotá city wherein educators face many problems from which the most remarkable and somehow frustrating one is the fact of not being enabled to awaken the student interest due to the implementation of neither funny nor challenging activities, letting the classroom activities be dominated by translating words, sentences, or phrases, and memorizing dialogues.

Also, children are more prone to develop communicative skills with less effort than adults. This is because they interact easily with other same-aged children either for playing, making new friends, or simply initiating a conversation. Within the multiple conversations they hold, most of them are focused on talking about toys and animated cartoons, which makes their imagination soar while having fun. Considering those factors, an initiative starts forming when using what the students like the most to promote and improve speaking skills in the English language within the classroom.

That initiative has to do with comic strips, which are helpful and practical instructional tools for students from different grades. In addition, they engage students in meaningful learning experiences where they get to practice essential skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Concerning this, Csabay (2006) explained that if “a picture accompanies a word, expression, or concept, the learner will memorize and recall it more easily” (p. 26).

This project is intended to help both the students and teachers use a strategy that can promote and improve speaking skills in JMR and state schools. For that reason, it was necessary

to create a website based on ten comic strips, with essential scenes taken from Grimm's Fairy Tales, which can be adaptable to the students from different grades. Furthermore, the execution of this project will also foster the representation of the characters, critical thinking about what would happen, conversation about the characters, and the scenery of the comic strip. Therefore, the creation of this project will make the students feel confident in speaking, either representing, thinking, or striking a conversation about the scenery, characters, events, and possible finals regarding comic strips (Short et al., 2018, p. 75).

At last, the creation and development of this project aim, not only to improve the speaking skills of primary students of JMR school, but also contributing to the teaching and learning process through a tool that helps the text comprehension, memorization, activation of the previous knowledge, enhancement the grammatical competence, and increase engagement and motivation, just like getting rid of the stress caused by the constant and monotonous activities aimed to write and develop grammatical topics. Likewise, Herrera and Murry (2016) indicated that creating a relaxing, stress-free environment enhances language acquisition.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The review of related literature aims to give a brief on what is associated with this study. This chapter discusses comics, the benefits of comic strips, the use of comic strips in teaching speaking, speaking, teaching speaking English as a foreign language, aspects of speaking, and activities to promote speaking.

Comic

Definition of comic strips.

Liu (2004) defined a comic strip as a series of pictures inside boxes that tell a story (p. 229). Equally, McCloud (1993) described a comic as a “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. Added to that, he asserted that juxtaposing means to place two things side by side so from the definition just mentioned, a comic at least consists of two panels” (p. 9). Similarly, Kunzle (1973 as cited in Meskin, 2007) affirmed that “a comic strip consists of a sequence of separate images with a preponderance of image over text that appears (and was originally intended to appear) in a mass media and tells a story which is both moral and topical” (p. 369). In like manner, Gubern (1979 as cited in Ortega, 2014) considered comic as “a narrative structure formed by progressive sequences of pictograms, in which they can be integrated elements of phonetic writing” (p. 2).

Equally important, Hayman and Pratt (2005 as cited in Meskin, 2007) stated that any compilation of images could be named as a comic “if (this) is a sequence of discrete, juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text” (p. 370). Correspondingly, Dondis (1992), in his book “*El Sintaxis de la Imagen, Introducción al Alfabetismo*,” mentioned that “the elements of the visual aids such as balance, tension, leveling and sharpening, preference for the lower-left corner, attraction, and grouping, positive and negative visual stimulations, are juxtaposed and express the interaction of visual stimulations situated at least two codes together (image and text)” (p. 5). Likewise, Rodríguez (1977) confirmed that “the image can construct a perfectly univocal message by the interaction of its various components” (p. 34), and as a sequential form of art (Eisner, 1999), comics could be defined as a visual medium that combines graphics and text creating a bridge between the information that is watched and the information that is read in daily life (Yang, 2008). In addition, comics could also be defined as a different form of literature that mixes images and text in order to tell a story with a varied range of topics (Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011). Therefore, comic books are a sequence of images and text and are considered a form of literature.

In light of the definitions mentioned above, the intent is essentially the same. Gavigan and Tomasevich (2011) concluded that a comic is “a medium of literature that integrates pictures and words and arranges them cumulatively to tell a story or convey information that can be humorous, mysterious, and so forth. This definition adds the idea that comics are literature and highlights their cumulative nature” (p. 6).

The benefit of comic strips.

It is pivotal to highlight that “comic strips provide the structure and stimulus so that students respond to since stories are universal; therefore, students from different cultures can understand their structure and identify with the characters. In addition, this tool helps them to acquire vocabulary, grammatical and communicative competence and provides them with special cultural knowledge as well” (Brown, 1994 as cited in Csabay, 2006, p. 26). Additionally, the characteristic of these materials also helps to increase motivation (especially when the comics are colored ones). More importantly, if a word, expression, or concept is accompanied by a picture (a visual image in one’s mind), the learner will memorize and recall it more easily (Oller, 1983 as cited in Csabay, 2006). Equally important, the colored illustration, simple theme and plot, and characterization will attract the person who read it.

Furthermore, comics are usually funny, thus applying them to methodological purposes will have the same effects as using games in teaching English. Also, as a result, it brings a cheerful atmosphere into the class (Csabay, 2006). Hence, the features of comic strips make them an ideal medium for reading and English courses. Besides, the “readability (interest, availability, suitability, comprehensibility, and flexibility) of comic strips for teachers and students are based mostly on the relevant literature” (Wright & Sherman, 1994 as cited in Ali, 2013, p. 58). Added to that, “comic strips have low readability levels with a paucity of words and sentences which are linguistically ideal for elementary and middle-aged readers” (Wright & Sherman, 1994 as cited in Wright & Sherman, 1999, p. 67).

Since the “comics make the text less threatening, these materials can help to increase engagement and motivation. Therefore, with the implementation of comics as a medium in teaching English, the students do not realize that they are learning English. They learn English in

more enjoyable and interesting ways” (Gorman, 2003; Krashen, 2004; Lyga, 2004 as cited in Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011, p. 5). That makes readability in comics measurable and determined not only on words alone but also on pictures. In other words, graphics support the terms to make the written text more comprehensible (Cary, 2004). What is more, with these materials, “the teachers can promote literacy, higher-level thinking, and writing skills by encouraging students to combine words and pictures to create comic strips” (Wright & Sherman, 1999, p. 66).

In light of the above, comic strips can be used as instructional materials for ESL students with low intermediate-level English learners and limited discourse and interactive competence. Therefore, comic strips in second language classrooms can guide students to hypothesize about the cartoons’ language, raise awareness of pragmatics, and emphasize language’s underlying regularity (Williams, 1995). Furthermore, by reading comics in class, “learners are asked to generate personal responses to something in the text, responses which necessitate the production of original discourse. Consequently, comic strips can be used not only for reading exercises but also for improving the other three skills. Apart from reading, various types of exercises can be used successfully in EFL classes” (Hirvela, 1996 as cited in Csabay, 2006, p. 25).

Use of comics strips in teaching speaking.

Children enjoy reading comics, so it makes perfect sense to use such a resource to enhance English-language learning (Graham, 2011). The use of animation promotes learning in students when used with both words and images, based on the theoretical foundation that students are more capable of making mental connections when the words and their corresponding images are worked on simultaneously (Mayer & Moreno, 2002). Additionally,

Tileston (2005) stated that “the students need to see and experience the learning before it makes sense personally. If teachers add a variety of media into the classroom, they significantly raise the possibility of reaching all students” (p. 137). What is more, with the use of a permanent, visual component and dialogue, which is permanent but not visual (Williams, 1995, p. 2), it is possible to create an exciting new set of English language teaching materials suitable for use by primary school students. Their tasks are designed to motivate students to use language for specific aims (Van den Branden, 2009), where vocabulary is predominantly learned by focusing on form for better retention (Laufer, 2005).

It could be concluded that the use of contextual comic strips for teaching speaking of the students can play a decisive, influential role in the English classroom and can positively impact the learning habits of many students. Comics can provide a robust median between literature and visual entertainment (Smith, 2006).

Speaking

Definition of speaking.

Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that “speaking is one of the central elements of communication” (p. 210). However, Brown (2004) affirmed that “speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information” (p. 98). Similarly, Irawati (2014 as cited in Zuhriyah, 2017)) defined the term speaking “as an activity to produce sayings in the form of words and sentences orally to communicate with others” (p. 26). Additionally, Chaney (1998 as cited in Kayi, 2006) attributed speaking as the process of building and sharing meaning utilizing verbal and nonverbal symbols

in various contexts. Added to that, Brumfit and Johnson (1979) also confirmed that “speaking is not only the oral production of written language but invades the mastery of a wide range” (p. 76).

Additionally, Hornby (1995) argued that speaking is “making use of words in an ordinary voice, uttering words, knowing and being able to use a language expressing one-self in words, and making a speech” (p. 826). Therefore, speaking is a tool of communication where the speaker can deliver their idea, opinion, feeling through verbal skill to the listener (Suryani, 2015). In addition, Nunan (2003) mentioned that speaking is a productive oral skill that produces systematic verbal utterances to express meaning and exchange thoughts and feelings using language. It means that speaking plays an essential role in communication (Samad et al., 2017).

From these definitions, it can be inferred that speaking as an oral skill is used to express a person’s understanding, convey intended meaning accurately with sufficient vocabulary, use language in appropriate contexts, and interact with other speakers fluently. Some of the connotations may be understood, while others may need to be processed first (Brindley, 1994).

Teaching speaking English as a foreign language.

Speaking is a crucial part of language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, teaching speaking has been undervalued for many years, and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues (Kayi, 2006). In reality, the speaking skill is an essential object of assessment because it is a part of the curriculum in language teaching (Luoma, 2004). In addition, it should be noted that “speaking is so much a part of daily life that we take it for granted” (Thornbury, 2005, p. 1). In fact, “in speaking and listening, the speakers tend to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspect of the world, or simply being together” (Jones, 1996, p. 12).

“Speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills” (Bailey & Savage, 1994 as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2000, p. 103). It is due to that the language is a complex system, and each system is different and requires reorganization of students thinking with lots of exposure (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Under those circumstances, creating a relaxing, stress-free environment enhances language acquisition (Herrera & Murry, 2016). For this reason, Nunan (2003 as cited in Kayi, 2006) exposed what is meant by “teaching speaking” and is nothing but teaching English language learners to:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns, and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation, and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, called fluency (Nunan, 2003 as cited in Kayi, 2006).

Aspects of speaking.

Nunan (1989) stated that the involvement of appropriate conversational formula, good ability to express phonological features of a language, excellent mastery stress, and an acceptable degree of fluency is required to be successful in speaking. In line with Nunan (1989), Samad et al. (2017) considered that “during the speaking process occurred in interaction, there are several features of speaking involved” (p. 100). Furthermore, Duong (2014, as cited in Samad et al.,

2017) mentioned that grammar, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation are the essential features of speaking.

First, Vocabulary. Vocabulary is a word that has its meaning in every function. A word expresses the content of ideas to avoid confusion in communication. It plays a valuable role in defining objects, actions, and ideas (Samad et al., 2017). According to Horby (1989 as cited in Samad et al., 2017), “an acceptable language is made up of the number of vocabularies. Mastering vocabulary would define someone’s capability in understanding language” (p. 100).

Second, Grammar. “Grammar is a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in the sentence” (Brown, 2001, p. 36). Moreover, Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011 as cited in Samad et al., 2017) wrote that grammar is a set of rules that determines the structure of a language, and it could be the way to combine units of a language. Combining necessary units of language help a speaker or a writer expand any ideas in their mind. It makes a person a lot easier to build communication in expressing messages in spoken or written.

Third, Pronunciation. It is the process of pronouncing a particular word correctly. In addition, it is a necessary aspect of speaking (Samad et al., 2017). Referring to Nation and Newton (2009 as cited in Samad et al., 2017), pronunciation is an individual sound that involves good articulation. It has sound features such as aspiration, voicing, voice sets, intonation, and stress (p. 100). Pronunciation plays a significant role in speaking, and it gives a hint toward what is being said. The interlocutor will misunderstand on catching the meaning whether the speaker pronounces wrong pronunciation. Therefore, pronunciation generates an acceptable and unambiguous lexical word in the language (Samad et al., 2017).

Fourth, Fluency. Yingjie (2014 as cited in Samad et al., 2017) mentioned that fluency is the capability to speak at an adequate speed, talk smoothly, and produce the correct word without overthinking. It means knowing about how the people express ideas without using filling words (“um” and “ah”) while talking to the other occurs (Samad et al., 2017). In this case, excellent fluency will create better confidence in expressing ideas and improve communication skills. To be classified as a fluent speaker, we might well fulfill these features as presented by Thornbury (2005 as cited in Samad et al., 2017) as follows, “pauses may be long but not often, and pauses allow at the meaningful transition point” (p. 100).

Fifth, Accuracy. It refers to an understanding word, right in structures, syntax, and better in catching the meaning of language messages without mistakes. It does not cause hesitation in interaction (Kusnierek, 2015 as cited in Samad et al., 2017). Good accuracy creates an impression toward how they deliver the message to the other (Samad et al., 2017). Therefore, accuracy refers to the ability to speak appropriately- that is, selecting the correct words and expressions to convey the intended meaning and using the grammatical patterns of English (Bailey, 2012).

Brown (2004 as cited in Samad et al., 2017) added that students also need to understand the micro and macro skills in speaking. The micro skill produces small chunks of language, for instance, morphemes, phonemes, words, collections, and phrasal units. This skill plays at the sentence level, which focuses on the ability to produce sentences. Meanwhile, macro one refers to the person who speaks the language, and it focuses on more prominent elements such as function, fluency, style, cohesion, discourse, nonverbal communication, and strategic options. Indeed, this macro skill emphasizes the speaker’s communicative functions during the conversation.

Activities to promote speaking.

Many activities can be helpful to promote speaking. However, Kayi (2006) highlighted some speaking activities that can be applied to ESL and EFL classroom settings to teach language learners how to speak in the best way possible. These speaking activities are provided below.

Discussions.

Harmer (2001) asserted that discussion activities offer chances for students to exchange their thoughts, talk about their experiences and express their opinions to improve their communicative ability when using the English language. For that reason, after a content-based lesson, a discussion can be held for various reasons. The students may conclude, share ideas about an event, or find solutions in their discussion groups. In this way, the discussion points are relevant so that students do not spend their time chatting with each other about irrelevant things (Kayi, 2006).

Role play.

One other way of getting students to speak is role-playing. Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. In role-playing activities, the teacher gives information to the learners, such as who they are and what they think or feel. Thus, the teacher can tell the student that “You are David, you go to the doctor and tell him what happened last night, and...” (Harmer, 1984 as cited in Kayi, 2006).

Simulations.

Harmer (1984) stated that simulation activities increase the self-confidence of hesitant students because, in them, the students have different roles and do not have to speak for themselves. Additionally, simulations are very similar to role-plays, but what makes them different is that they are more elaborated. In simulations, students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment. For instance, a student acting as a singer gets a microphone to sing and so on (Kayi, 2006).

Information gap.

Information gap activities allow every student to speak in the target language for an extended period, and students naturally produce more speech than they would otherwise do (Sartika, 2016). In addition, these activities serve many purposes, such as solving a problem or collecting information. In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the other partner's report, and the partners will share their information. Also, each partner plays a vital role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the others' information (Kayi, 2006).

Brainstorming.

Clark (2010) asserted that brainstorming is a technique to create ideas as possible in the group. It can be interpreted as a way to get many various views of a group of people quickly. Therefore, students can produce ideas in a limited time. Depending on the context, individual or group brainstorming is effective, and learners generate ideas freely and rapidly. The excellent

characteristic of brainstorming is that the students are not criticized for sharing new ideas (Mirkhodjaeva, 2019).

Storytelling.

The storytelling activities serve the students to essentially retell a story that they have read or heard in their own words. When narrating a story, the students remember the story, then reconstruct the memory, ideas, and internalize them. (Suban, 2021). In addition, storytelling fosters creative thinking. It also helps the students to express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have (Kayi, 2006).

Interviews.

It is one of the cooperative learning techniques that can improve communication skills, especially in spoken language. In this technique, student pairs take turns interviewing each other and then report learning (Candraloka, 2006). Therefore, conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability in class and outside and helps them become socialized (Kayi, 2006).

Story completion.

Story completion is an engaging and enjoyable activity in speaking class. In using this technique, the students sit in a circle. The teacher starts to narrate a story, but the teacher stops telling the story after a few sentences. Each student then takes a turn to continue narrating the story in four to ten sentences (Suban, 2021).

Reporting.

Before coming to class, students are asked to read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, they report to their friends what they find as the most exciting news. Students can also talk about whether they have experienced anything worth telling their friends in their daily lives before class (Kayi, 2006).

Picture narrating.

This activity is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential images by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating (Kayi, 2006).

Picture describing.

Another way to use pictures in a speaking activity is to give students just one graphic and describe what is in the image. For this activity, students can form groups, and each group is given a different picture. Students discuss the illustration with their groups, then a spokesperson for each group describes the image to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills (Suban, 2021; Kayi, 2006).

Find the difference.

This activity produces plenty of purposeful question–and–answer exchanges. Therefore, it is necessary vocabulary is specific and likely predictable, so it is suggested to discuss and write up these items in advance on the board (Ur, 2012). In addition, Kayi (2006) expounded that, for

this activity, students can work in pairs. Then, each couple is given two different pictures: boys playing football and another picture of girls playing tennis. Students, in teams, discuss the similarities and differences in the images.

Based on the literature presented, it can be concluded that comics are a medium used to express ideas with images, often combined with text or other visual information. In addition, they arrange sequentially to tell a story or convey information that can be humorous, mysterious, educative, and enjoyable. Therefore, this material can be beneficial since it lets the teachers implement stimulating activities for students to practice their speaking skills, reading comprehension and build their imagination and creativity.

Chapter Three: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale of designing ten comic strips about Grimm's Fairy Tales on a website in order to assist JMR teachers in fostering and enhancing the students' speaking abilities in the education center; in addition, this pedagogical tool will make the teachers include new activities in their lesson plans for the EFL classrooms to help students feel more confident when it comes to talking since although these stories are not from Colombian culture, most of them are known by the children in their mother tongue. Also, I give an overview about what a comic strip is, its importance in teaching speaking, the support of fairy tales in comic strips, and the use of technological media to facilitate the access of the resource.

According to McCloud (1993), comics are "juxtaposed pictorial, and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p. 9). Therefore, comic strips are a kind of text characterized by illustrations that place the reader into different situations shown by the text. If both definitions are looked at, speaking skills can be reinforced through the different narrative sequences in which comic strips are presented, and both text and image give the reader a better understanding of the text without translating every single word as many students do. This one can be seen as a tool in as much as this shows an alternative way of speaking teaching and speaking learning, showing different results in class.

Additionally, comic strips are a powerful educational tool. First, because they are visual, and the students love visual media, so they are immersed in them. Second, in contrast to other

optical media like films and animations, comics are permanent. Therefore, language and actions in film and animation are on-screen one minute and gone the next, while in comics, time progresses only as quickly as the reader's eyes move across the page. It can be said that the rate of information transfer is in the reader's control (Yang, 2008).

In line with Yang (2008), comic strips would be used to overcome problems related to students' speaking skills. The simple sentence structures in comic strips enable the students to understand what the sentences mean. Also, pictures in comic strips are used for inferring complex vocabularies and help the students memorize and recall words, expressions, or concepts that they want to learn. Moreover, the colored illustration, simple theme and plot, and characterization can also attract students' interest, especially among teenagers and young learners. Not only that, but comic strips also provide variation in the teaching and learning process. The teacher can do many activities using those media.

Including Grimm's fairy tales in comic strips will be the primary support of this didactic instrument. They often teach the essential values of life such as trust, hope, honesty, kindness, and belief in high power, which could be interpreted as a root of faith (Jones, 2002 as cited in Suryana et al., 2020). Furthermore, Fairy tales implant motivations to adhere to the significant values of civilized society. Striving for these values is motivated and modeled in these tales, and the ground is set for success in achieving a meaningful life. Stories and fairy tales help children feel positive about other countries and cultures and broaden their world knowledge (Cameron, 2001).

Therefore, this website that contains Grimm's fairy tales in comic strips is an essential means for this resource to be available to use in the classroom. In addition, the teachers can use this tool either for planning lessons, creating new activities as of that resource, changing the

routine, and improving the atmosphere in the homeroom, generating motivation and confidence when speaking. It should be noted that in this digital era, the use of technologies in teaching languages has an increased advantage on the development of grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills (Haigh, 2010; Levy, 2009; Namaziandost & Shafiee, 2018 as cited in Suryana et al., 2020). Also, technology can aid in advancing the curriculum. It is no secret that technological teaching strategies have successfully been utilized in many institutions worldwide (Gunada, 2017). The development of interactive media technology has improved the utilization of technology in learning situations (Fralinger and Owens, 2009 as cited in Suryana et al., 2020). One of the technologies is the web since it supplies teaching and learning with plenty of applications. By using technology, the teachers can finish many jobs more efficiently and effectively. Utilizing the web in education features a positive impact in classes (Gunada, 2017).

To conclude, speaking is an essential skill that the students must master in order to be able to communicate effectively (Gunada, 2017). For this reason, in the learning process, the teacher needs to facilitate the student using appropriate media with the activity to achieve the objectives in the language learning process. One of the media that can be used to teach speaking is a comic strip. Comic strips will help students aid comprehension, memorize, and recall words, improve grammatical competence, and increase engagement and motivation.

Chapter Four: The Project

This thesis project contains an educational website with ten comic strips about ten relevant and most known Grimm's fairy tales, which are intended to improve students' speaking skills and support teachers in implementing new activities that can promote the use of English speaking within the classroom. In addition, this webpage also provides easy-to-use exercises that can be applied before the speaking activity per each comic strip.

The name of this website is "Ten Grimm's Fairy Tales in Comic Strips," activities to promote Speaking skills (Figure 4.1) and the web address is <https://gtfcomicstrips.anklar.live/>.

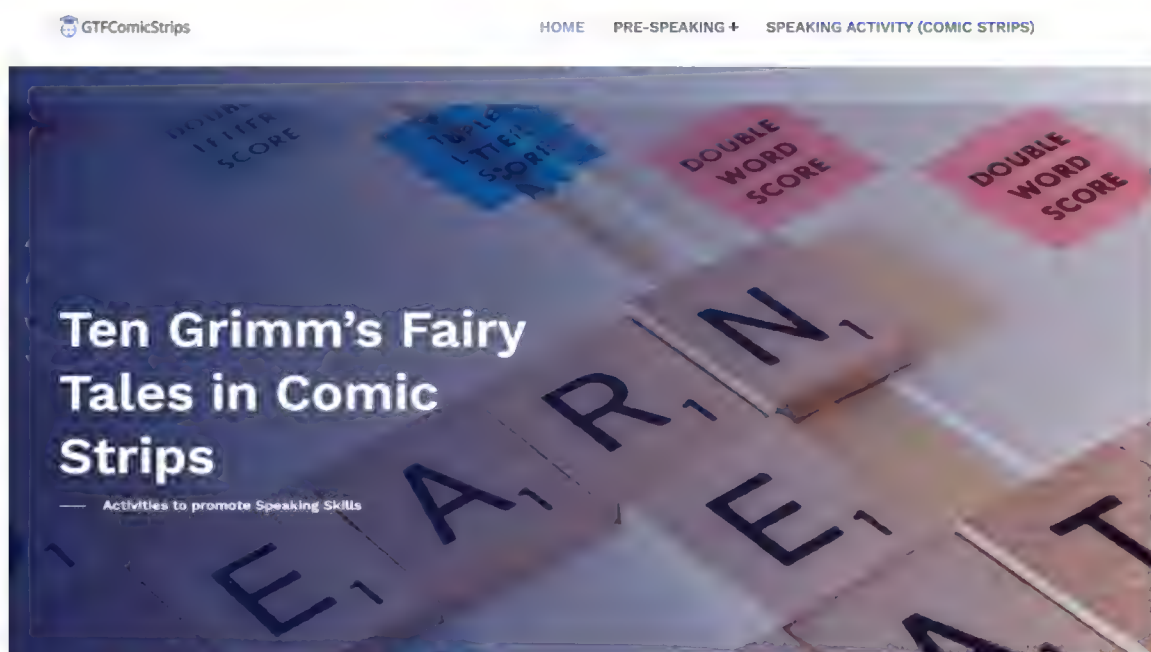


Figure 4.1: Home Page

Below the home page, teachers will find a short introduction about the benefits of implementing comic strips in EFL classrooms as a tool to improve speaking skills (Figure 4.2). They will also find three links that will lead to the materials related to comic strips. The first two are pre-speaking activities, and the third one is the main speaking activity. These resources will provide EFL teachers with exercises, which can be adapted to different grade students and give them better opportunities to speak about what they read and observe.

— Introduction

Comic strips are helpful and practical instructional tools for students from different grades. In addition, they engage students in meaningful learning experiences where they get to practice essential skills such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

This webpage is intended to help both the students and teachers use a strategy that can promote and improve speaking skills in state schools. Additionally, this website provides ten comic strips based on essential scenes taken from Grimm's Fairy Tales, which can be adaptable to the different grade students.

The execution of these activities will also foster the representation of the characters, critical thinking about what would happen, conversation about the characters, and the scenery of the comic strips. These tools will make the students feel confident in speaking, representing, thinking, or striking a conversation about the picture, characters, events, and possible finals regarding comic strips (Short et al., 2018, p. 75).

Figure 4.2: Introduction

In the first link called "Pre-Speaking," teachers will find two more hyperlinks that will drive to two pre-speaking activities. The first one is called "Pre-Speaking Activity (Blank Spaces)," which will provide teachers with ten activities in black and white images about the Grimm's Fairy Tales and blank thought-bubbles. These activities will make students think, predict, write, and speak about what the characters would say in each scene; also, this exercise will make students share ideas with other classmates and teachers that lead the activity (Figure 4.3). Furthermore, the students can act out dialogues they have written in the thought bubbles in

order to make speaking livelier and more enjoyable. Therefore, through this activity, the students will pretend that they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. Before performing the dialogues, the teachers must give enough time for practicing and helping the students to go through the scripts by drawing their attention to appropriate stress, intonation, and speed as if they were theatre directors. By doing this, the teachers will encourage the students to learn and produce language simultaneously.

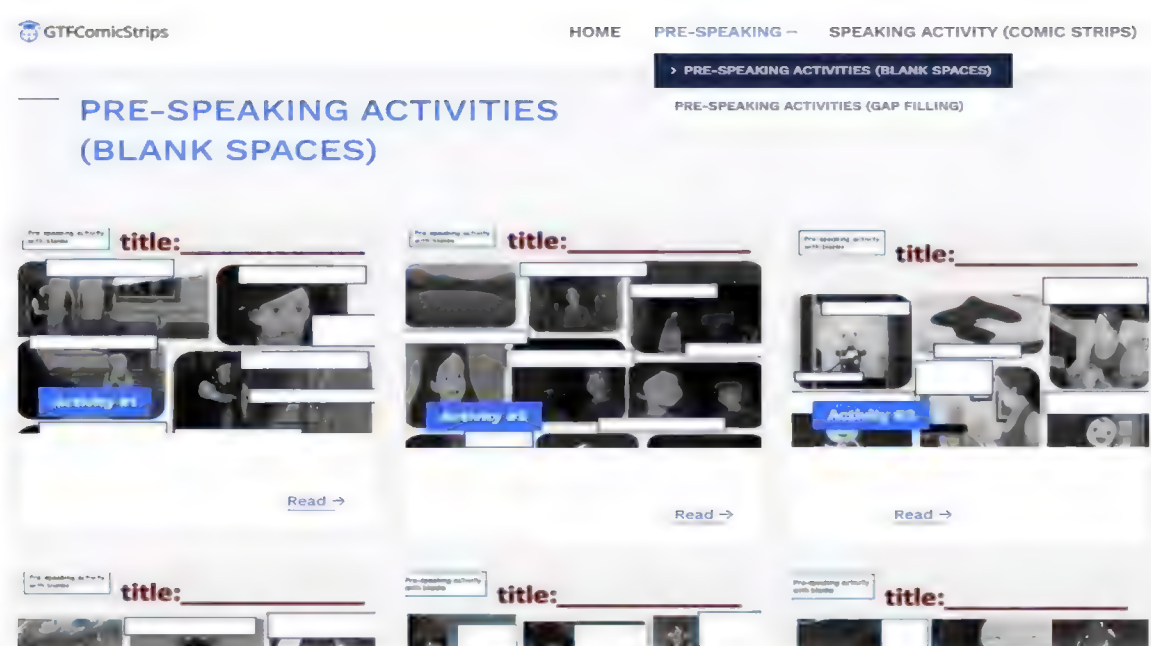


Figure 4.3: Pre-speaking activities (blank spaces)

In the second hyperlink, teachers will find ten gap filling exercises with black and white pictures related to the Grimm's fairy tales in comic strips (Figure 4.4). These exercises will allow the students to efficiently complete the blank spaces by reading short excerpts and observing the displayed images related to the previous scenes. These materials let the students know more about the comic strip and suppose the appropriate expression or vocabulary to complete the lines

on these materials. On top of that, the children might share their suppositions with other classmates. Apart from that, it should be noted that pictures with clues help students with their assumptions. Also, they give a clue as to what is to come, what the main idea is, and what is important. Therefore, by using these activities, the learning mnemonics technique with pictures is applied to assist students in remembering new words that can easily be implemented when it comes to speaking.

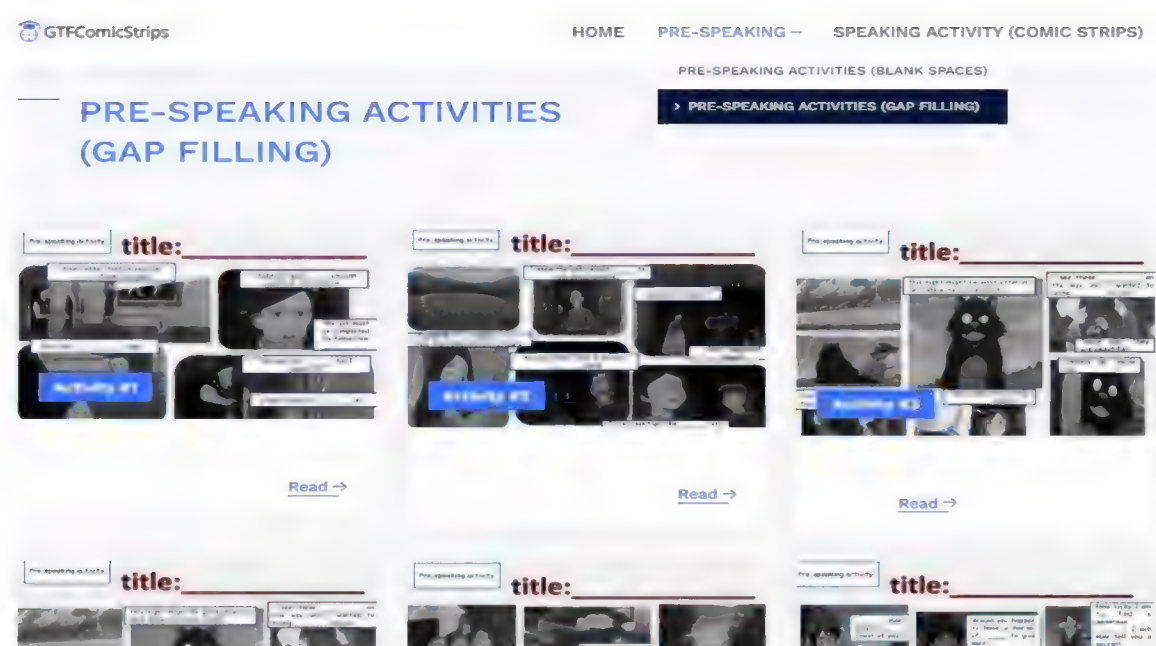


Figure 4.4: Pre-speaking activities (gap filling)

In the second link, teachers will find ten speaking activities in full-color pictures related to the Grimm's fairy tales in comic strips with the scripts in the thought bubbles (Figure 4.5). These activities are easy to read and make two or more participants read the dialogues. Additionally, these speaking exercises will allow the teachers to implement other didactic dynamics such as dramatizing or role-playing the comic characters.

Equally important, other activities that might come out from using these materials are "Talk as Interaction" and "Discussion." Talk as interaction is a kind of activity, also known as conversation; due to that, it mainly focuses on the speakers instead of messages. Therefore, it lets the students be friendly and establish a comfort zone while interacting with others so that the social function, which is the primary intention, can be reached. In the same token, comic strips might be used with the activity related to the discussion since it reduces the students' anxiety and gives them a chance to share their ideas. Additionally, the students might also do more challenging activities like debating in which they prepare arguments in favor or against various propositions. Here, not only the students are participating who have a significant role in a discussion, but also the teachers participate because the success of discussion depends on their ability to prompt and encourage the students.

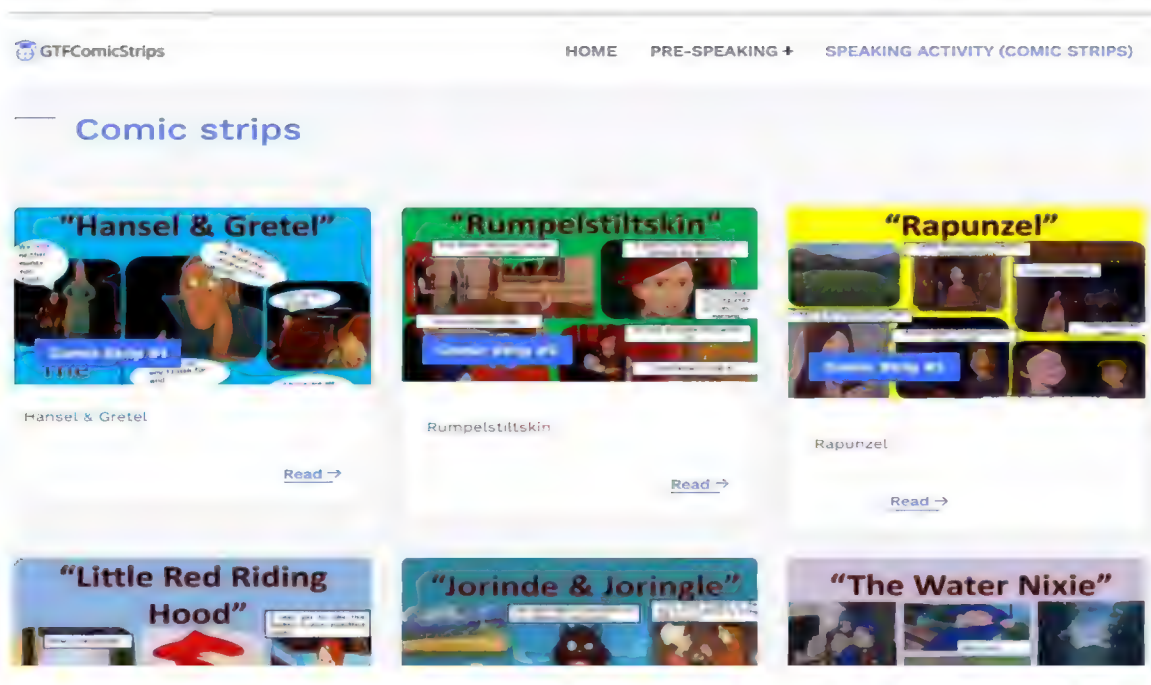


Figure 4.5: Speaking activity (comic strips)

The following comic strips are already on the website address

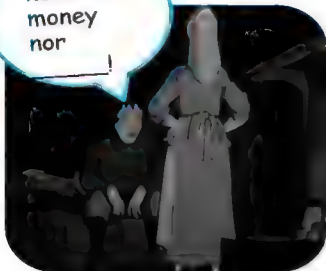
<https://gtfcomicstrips.anklar.live/> to be used in an EFL classroom (Figure 4.6).



Pre-speaking activity

title: _____

We have
neither
money
nor _____



So, Why don't
we leave the
woods? _____ in the



_____, by
_____ means!



The
next
day

We're on our
_____ to look
for _____
strawberries



Where _____
we _____,
stepmother?



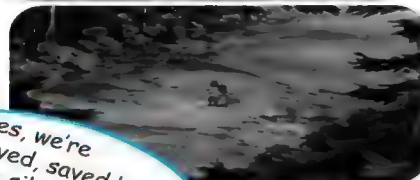
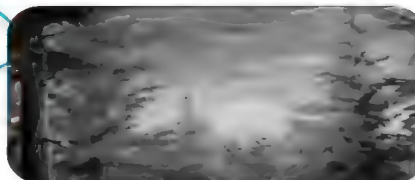
You both quit whining! I
know those _____
are around here
somewhere, you wait _____!

Let's rest
here,
before
_____ go on

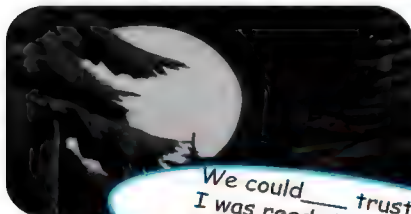


Very well
_____ mother!

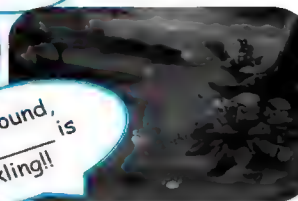
Yes, we're
saved, saved by
the silvery
_____! Look!!



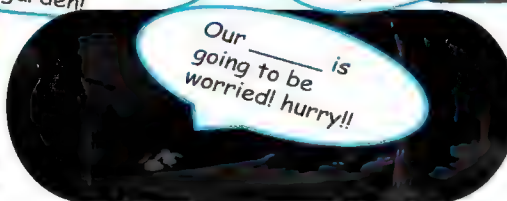
We could _____ trust her, so
I was ready I made a trail
with these _____ that I
picked up in the garden!



The ground,
the _____ is
sparkling!!



Our _____ is
going to be
worried! hurry!!



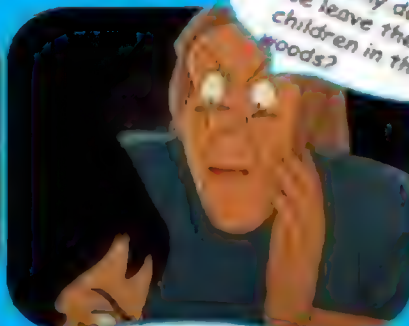
Retrieved
from
Grimm's
fairy tales.

"Hansel & Gretel"

We have
neither
money
nor
food!



So, why don't
we leave the
children in the
woods?



No, by no
means!



The
next
day

We're on our
way to look for
wild
strawberries



Where are we
going,
stepmother?



You both quit whining! I
know those strawberries
are around here
somewhere, you wait here!

Let's rest
here,
before we
go on



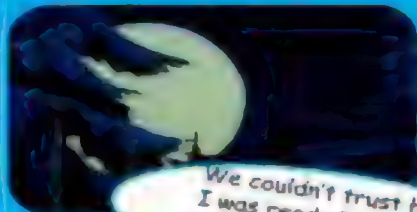
Very well
stepmother!



Yes, we're
saved, saved by
the silvery
moon! Look!



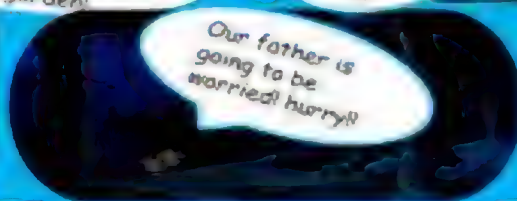
We couldn't trust her, so
I was ready I made a trail
with these rocks that I
picked up in the garden!



The ground,
the ground is
sparkling!



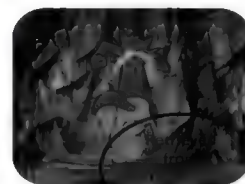
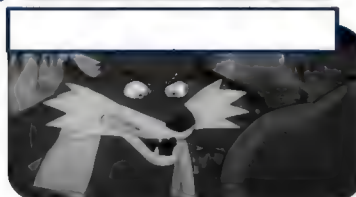
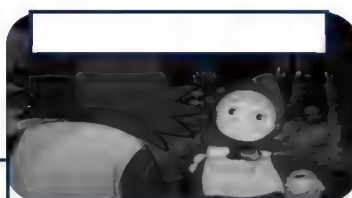
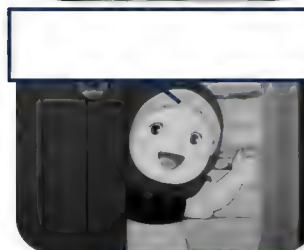
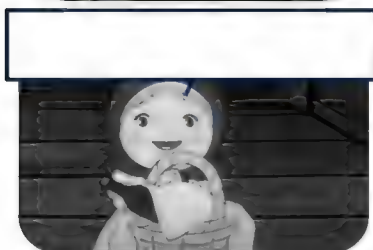
Our father is
going to be
married! hurry!!



Illustrated
by
Graham
Sullivan

Pre-speaking activity
with blanks

title: _____



fairy tales.

Pre-speaking activity

title: _____

Honey, come _____!

Yes, mommy!

Yes, _____! It's a pleasure for me to take this to my _____'s!

I won't forget my red hood!

But be very careful! You must not talk to strangers!

I need you to take this _____ to your grandma's house!

I promise I won't _____ to any _____! Bye,

Hello, Mrs. Merriwether!

Hello, little red _____ hood!

Where are you going?

I'm going to my _____'s house!

Bye, bye Mrs. _____!

Bye, bye little red riding _____!

Hello, _____ hood!

Who are you?

I'm your real fairy, I want to _____ you!

Oh, it's a _____ to meet you

Would you like to _____ some mushrooms?

No! I just want to _____ you!

Stop!

fairy tales.



Figure 4.6: Comic strip samples

To conclude, this website's design is mainly based on the use of ten stories related to Grimm's Fairy Tales in comic strips to assist EFL teachers with materials that can be useful to enhance their students' speaking skills. These comic strips are divided into three activities: the Pre-Speaking with Blanks, the Pre-Speaking Activity with Gap Filling, and the Speaking Activity using the same ten stories. Each of these activities helps the teachers promote and improve the students' speaking skills through English exposure that can easily combine with didactic dynamics like dramatization, role-play, talk as interaction, and discussion. Therefore, using this resource in the EFL classroom has positive results in different aspects such as learning new vocabulary and improving their communicative competence and cultural competence (Csabay, 2006). Finally, considering what has been said about using comic strips in the EFL classroom, the use of comic strips in this research can be understood as an essential means for students to interact, work, reflect, and learn during the learning process.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Speaking is an essential component of either second or foreign language learning and teaching. This ability plays a relevant role in the process of communication among people. However, teaching speaking, especially the English language, has been undervalued, and EFL language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues (Kayi, 2006). Perhaps, they assimilate teaching English speaking as a simple listening, writing, and reading exercise, when in fact, teaching speaking in a foreign language needs a certain grade of intensity that goes further than a class activity.

A similar situation has been occurring in Jose Manuel Restrepo School wherein the EFL teachers use the teaching speaking as a five minutes-practice exercise, and it is because they look for tools that can activate the speaking ability in the foreign language that works at the beginning of the class, but that rapidly disappears since teachers do not count on a sequential tool that helps them to instill confidence within their students when it comes to speaking.

Considering that situation with the EFL teachers, there is a necessity of creating an educative, didactic, and sequential tool that promotes and improves the primary students' speaking skills. That tool has to do with creating comic strips based on Grimm's Fairy Tales uploaded on an accessible website that mainly looks for the teachers to engage students in meaningful learning experiences to practice essential skills, such as writing, reading, listening, and principally speaking.

I hope this project helps the teachers to use a strategy that can promote and improve primary students' speaking skills in JMR school. In addition, this strategy is intended to foster other didactic dynamics that make the students feel confident in speaking, either representing, thinking, or striking a conversation about the scenery, characters, events, and possible finals regarding comic strips.

Finally, in order for this material to be continued, it will need to be updated with more comic strips related to Grimm's Fairy Tales that can contribute to the teaching and learning speaking process. Additionally, it will also be interesting to include this material into the English foreign language area curriculum programs, giving continuity with the development of different topics. At last, it will be pivotal that for the development of this tool that all of the EFL teachers in that education center know all the advantages and benefits that comic strips provide as a new alternative in the training speaking and language acquisition. Therefore, its affordability, versatility, and nature that has made it a popular, motivating, and practical strategy for developing communicative competence.

References

- Ali, M. (2013). The effect of comic strips on EFL reading comprehension. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 4(1), 54–64.
- Bailey, K. M. (2012). *Practical English language teaching: Speaking*. McGraw-Hill Create.
- Brindley, S. (1994). *Teaching English*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach language to language pedagogy*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Brumfit, C., & Johnson, K. (Eds.) (1979). *The communicative approach to language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Candraloka, O. R. (2006). Implementing three steps-interview in teaching speaking. *Jurnal Edulingua*, 3(1), 39–46.
- Cary, S. (2004). *Going graphic: Comics at work in the multilingual classroom*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language (3rd ed)*. USA: Heinle&Heinle.

- Clark, C. H. (2010). *Brainstorming: The dynamic new way to create successful ideas*. Classic Business Bookshelf.
- Csabay, N. (2006). Using comic strips in language classes. *The Internet ETF Journal*. (1). Retrieved September 8, 2021, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1107886.pdf>.
- Dondis, D. A. (1992). *La sintaxis de la imagen. Introducción al alfabeto visual*. Barcelona, España, Ed. Gustavo Gili.
- Eisner, W. (1990). *Comics and sequential art*. Florida: Poorhouse Press.
- Gavigan, K. W., & Tomasevich, M. (2011). *Connecting comics to curriculum: Strategies for grades 6- 12*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Graham, S. (2011). Comics in the classroom: Something to be taken seriously. *Language Education in Asia*, 2(1), 92–102. Retrieved September 8, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.5746/leia/11/v2/i1/a07/graham>
- Gunada, I. (2017). Using YouTube video; An IT-based media to improve students' speaking skill. Retrieved October 16, 2021, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326082917>
- Harmer, J. (1984). *The practice of English language teaching*. London: Longman.
- Herrera, S. G., & Murry, K. G. (2016). *Mastering ESL/EFL methods: Differentiated instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Jones, P. (1996). Planning an oral language program. Talking to learn. *Newtown, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association*, 12-26.
- Kayi, H. (2006). Teaching speaking: activities to promote speaking in a second language. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 12(11), November 2006. Retrieved October 9, 2021, from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kayi-TeachingSpeaking.html>.

- Laufer, B. (2005). Focus on form in second language vocabulary learning. *EUROSLA Yearbook*, 5, 223-250. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/eurosla.5.11lau>
- Liu, J. (2004). Effects of comic strips on L2 learners' reading comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(2), 225-243. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588379>
- Louma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking, the cambridge language assessment series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2002). Animation as an aid to multimedia learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 14(1): 87-99. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013184611077>
- McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Retrieved from [http://mm12.johncaserta.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Understanding%20Comics%20\(The%20Invisible%20Art\)%20By%20Scott%20McCloud.pdf](http://mm12.johncaserta.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Understanding%20Comics%20(The%20Invisible%20Art)%20By%20Scott%20McCloud.pdf)
- Meskin, A. (2007). Defining comics? *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65(4), 369-379. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2007.00270.x>
- Mirkhodjaeva, G. (2019). Teaching speaking: Developing speaking activities. *Nauka v Sovremennom Mire*, 39(6), 134-140. Retrieved September 10, 2021, from <https://doi.org/10.31618/2524-0935-2019-39-6-134-140>
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English language teaching*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Ortega, S. (2014). *Revista de filosofía FACTÓTUM*, 11(30). Retrieved from <http://www.revistafactotum.com>

- Richards, J., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodríguez, D. J. L. (1977). *Las funciones de la imagen en la enseñanza: semántica y didáctica*. Barcelona, España. Editorial G. Gili.
- Rubin, J., & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to be a more successful language learner (2nd ed)*. Bostom: Heinle&Heinle publisher.
- Samad, I. A., Bustari, A., & Ahmad, D. (2017). The use of podcasts in improving students' speaking skill. *JELE (Journal of English Language and Education)*, 3(2), 97–111.
Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.26486/jele.v3i2.256>
- Sartika, D. (2016). Teaching speaking using the information gap technique. *ENGLISH EDUCATION JOURNAL (EEJ)*, 7(3), 273–285.
- Short, D., Becker, H., Cloud, N., & Hellman, A. B. (2018). *The 6 principles for exemplary teaching of English learners: Grades K-12*. TESOL Press.
- Smith, A. (2006). *Teaching with comics*. Canada: University of Lethbridge
- Suban, T. S. (2021). Teaching speaking: Activities to promote speaking skills in EFL classrooms. *LECTIO*, 1(1), 41–50.
- Suryana, I., Hidantikarnillah, V., & Oktavianti, I. N. (2020). Enhancing students' English speaking skills through web-based teaching. *EDUVELOP*, 3(2), 90–104.
- Suryani, L. (2015). The effectiveness of role play in teaching speaking. *ELTIN Journal*, 3(II).
- Tileston, D. W. (2005). *Training manual for what every teacher should know*. Corwin Press.
Retrieved October 9, 2021, from http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/7033_tileston_preface.pdf
- Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to teach speaking*, Longman.

- Ur, P. (2012). *A course in English language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van den Branden, K. (2009). Mediating between predetermined order and chaos: The role of the teacher in task-based language education. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19(3), 264-285. Retrieved October 9, 2021, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2009.00241.x>
- Williams, N. (1995). The comic book as course book: Why and how. *Long Beach, CA: Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED390277>
- Wright, G., & Sherman, R. (1999). Let's create a comic strip. *Reading improvement*, 36(2), 66-72.
- Yang, G. (2008). Graphic novels in the classroom. *ProQuest Education Journal*, Vol. III, No. 85, January 2008. Retrieved October 16, 2021, from http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/trc/upload/Gene_Yang_article.pdf.
- Zuhriyah, M. (2017). Storytelling to improve students' speaking skill. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 10(1), 119–134. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v10i1.879>